



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

April 27, 2005

News Release

ICE AGENTS ARREST 66 ILLEGAL ALIENS WHO WERE BUILDING A NEW FEDERAL COURT FACILITY IN ORLANDO

Arrests Part of ICE's Continued Mission to Closing Existing Critical Infrastructure Vulnerabilities

ORLANDO – Special agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrested 66 illegal aliens working at a federal construction site here this morning after an ICE investigation that began with a lead provided by Congressman John Mica's office.

The illegal workers were employed by contractors and sub-contractors and were tasked with building the future home of the Middle District's federal courthouse. The courthouse will be the central location where the government will be presenting and litigating criminal and civil cases. The new building will house federal judges, the U.S. Marshals Service, and administrative staff.

The ICE investigation revealed that the illegal workers utilized fraudulent Social Security numbers and other counterfeit documents to obtain employment by various sub-contractors working for Hensel and Phelps Construction Company.

"Today's arrests are a reflection of the federal government's continued commitment to safeguarding our nation's critical infrastructure, said Raymond M. Connolly, ICE's acting special agent-in-charge in Tampa. "Thanks to Congressman Mica's information we were able to neutralize a potential vulnerability in our community."

"Our laws must be enforced," said Congressman Mica. "I am pleased that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, and local law enforcement agents are appropriately taking action to crack down on the problem of illegal immigration, particularly where important federal projects are under construction."

Those arrested are from the following countries: Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. All are in ICE custody awaiting the outcome of their cases. The investigation into this case is ongoing.

Today's arrests were made with the assistance of the Orlando Police Department, the U.S. Marshals Service, ICE's Detention and Removal Office and ICE's Federal Protective Service.

In accordance with ICE's homeland security mission, our agents prioritize worksite enforcement efforts by focusing on investigations related to critical infrastructure, national security and employers who engage in egregious criminal violations. Unauthorized workers employed in sensitive security sites and critical infrastructure facilities -- such as airports, nuclear power and chemical plants and defense contractors -- are vulnerable to exploitation by terrorists, smugglers, traffickers or other criminals.

An employer who knowingly hires unauthorized workers may be criminally prosecuted or be faced with administrative fines of up to \$11,000 per person. ICE works with employers to educate them about their responsibilities in this area. In addition, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) operates the Basic Pilot Program, a web-based application that employers can use to verify the employment eligibility of newly hired workers. The Basic Pilot Program is now available nationwide.

-ICE-

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities